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## SOME RABBINIC PARALLELS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT<sup>1</sup>.

IT is now more than half a century since Renan put the question, "Has Jewish tradition anything to teach us concerning Jesus?" This question must be answered in the negative. As far as the contemporaneous Jewish literature goes, it does not contain a single reference to the founder of Christianity. All the so-called Anti-Christiana collected by mediaeval fanatics, and freshened up again by modern ignoramuses, belong to the later centuries, when history and biography had already given way to myth and speculation. Almost every Christian sect, every Christian community, created a Christ after its own image or dogma. The Jewish legend—a growth of these later centuries—gave him an aspect of its own, purely apocryphal in its character, neither meant nor ever taken by the Jews as real history.

But if the Rabbis have nothing to tell us about the personality of Jesus, Rabbinic literature has a good deal to teach us about the times in which he lived and laboured. And what is more important is that a thorough study of this literature might, with due discretion, help us towards a better understanding of the writings attributed to Jesus and his disciples. To prove this by a few instances will be the aim of my present lecture. It is intended as an invitation to fellow students to devote more attention to

<sup>1</sup> Paper read before the Hebrew class at University College, London, on October 19, 1899. The references to the authorities in the following notes are confined to a minimum.

a branch of literature, from the study of which the Christian divine might derive as much profit as the Jewish Rabbi.

In justice to bygone times, it should be pointed out that this fact had by no means escaped the searching eyes of Christian scholars of previous generations. They both recognized the importance of the Talmud for a better knowledge of the two Testaments, and applied themselves to an honest study of its contents. As the fruits of these studies, it is sufficient to mention here the *Porta Mosis* of Pocock, the *De Synedriis* of Selden, the *Horae Rabbinicae* of Lightfoot. The Cambridge Platonists also deserve honourable mention in this connexion. These great and hospitable minds extended the range of their literary acquaintances also to the Rabbis, and the *Select Discourses* of John Smith, and the *Discourse on the Lord's Supper* by Cudworth<sup>1</sup>, show that this acquaintance was by no means a passing one.

All the names just given belong to this island, but the continent in no way remained behind England. The names of the continental students of Rabbinism are duly recorded in Zunz's *Zur Literatur und Geschichte* and in other bibliographical works. It is sufficient to mention in this place the name of Reuchlin, who saved the Talmud from the torch which a converted Jew was about to apply to it; the two Buxdorfs, whose works bearing on Rabbinic literature fill pages in the catalogues of the British Museum; and Vitranga, whose books on Rabbinic topics are considered by the best scholars as classical pieces of work.

However, these good things are (as already indicated) a matter of the past. The present shows a decided deterioration. Not only has the number of students devoting

<sup>1</sup> In connexion with this work I should like to call the attention of students to the *Das letzte Passahmahl Christi und der Tag seines Todes*, by Professor D. Chwolson (St. Petersburg, 1892), a work which, for the depth of its Rabbinic learning and the critical acumen displayed in it, has hardly its equal. It is indeed, as far as I know, the first attempt to treat what one may call the *Halachic* part of the New Testament with the thoroughness and devotion usually bestowed only on doctrinal points.

themselves to Rabbinic literature shrunk to a miserable minimum, but the quality of the work produced by these latter-day students is such as to show a distinct decay, among the very few praiseworthy exceptions being, for instance, the theological works of Dr. C. Taylor. No student who is interested in the constitution of the ancient Synagogue dare neglect Vitranga's *De Synagoga Vetere*, which appeared in the year 1696; but he would certainly lose nothing by omitting to read most of the productions of our own century on the same subject.

The causes of this decay are not to be sought for far off. There was first the influence of Schleiermacher, whose interpretation of Christianity formed, as far as its negative side was concerned, one long strained effort to divorce it from Judaism. "I hate historic relations of this sort," he exclaims in one place; and proceeds to say, "every religion is conditioned by itself, and forms an eternal necessity." Schleiermacher's theory of the origin of Christianity was, as is well known, mainly based on the Johannine Gospel to the disparagement of the Synoptics. The German Marcion had thus every reason to hate history. But as the Talmud still reminded the world of these historical relations, Schleiermacher and his school adopted the course of vulgar parvenus, and cut the Rabbis and their literary remains. The second cause of this decay is the suspicion thrown on all Jewish tradition by the higher criticism. Anybody who has ever read any modern Introductions to the Old Testament will remember that as a rule they open with a reference to the Rabbinic account of the rise of the canon, to be followed by a lengthy exposition showing its utter untrustworthiness. To make matters more complete, efforts were made to disqualify the Rabbis from bearing witness even to events which took place when the Synagogue was already a fully-established institution, administered by the ancestors of the Rabbis in their capacity as scribes and saints or Chassidim. I am referring to the controversy as to the existence of the so-called Great Synagogue, com-

mencing, according to tradition, with Ezra the scribe, and succeeded by a permanent court consisting of seventy-one members called Synhedrin; which court again was, according to tradition, presided over by two eligible members, the one called Nasi or Prince-President, whilst the other bore the title of Ab-Beth-Din, Father of the Court of Justice or Vice-President, both of whom were recruited for the most part from Pharisaic circles. Modern criticism, mainly on the strength of certain passages in Josephus and in the New Testament, maintains a negative attitude towards these accounts. The questions involved are too important and too complicated to be entered upon in a casual way. We need only notice the following fact. This is, that the doubts regarding the traditional account of the constitution of the Synhedrin were first raised in this century by Krochmal in the forties, taken up again by Kuenen in the sixties, to be followed by Wellhausen in the eighties. But when reading their works you will observe that, whilst Krochmal respectfully questions tradition, and Kuenen enters into elaborate examination of the documents, Wellhausen summarily dismisses them. Matters have now indeed come to such a pass that the principle has been laid down that it is not necessary to have a thorough knowledge of Rabbinic literature in order to express an opinion about its merits or demerits. It is probably thought that we may condemn it by mere intuition. It is impossible to argue with transcendental ignorance.

Trusting that none of those present have any reason to hate history, or to believe in the superior virtue of ignorance, I will now proceed to the subject of my lecture.

Let me first state the fact that the impression conveyed to the Rabbinic student by the perusal of the New Testament is in many parts like that gained by reading an old Rabbinic homily. On the very threshold of the New Testament he is confronted by a genealogical table<sup>1</sup>, a feature

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Moreh Neboche Hazzeman*, p. 45, הַצֵּמָן.

not uncommon in the later Rabbinic versions of the Old Testament, which are rather fond of providing Biblical heroes with long pedigrees. They are not always accurate, but have as a rule some edifying purpose in view. The Rabbis even declare that the Book of Chronicles, with its long series of names, has no other purpose than that of being interpreted<sup>1</sup>, that is to say, of enabling us to derive some lesson from them. In the fifth chapter of the sayings of the Jewish Fathers, dealing mostly with round numbers, we read: "There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham to make known how long-suffering God is."

In the second chapter of Matthew the Rabbinic student meets with many features known to him from the Rabbinic narratives about the birth of Abraham; the story of the Magi in particular impresses him as a homiletical illustration of Num. xxiv. 17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob," which star the interpretation of the Synagogue referred to the star of the Messiah<sup>2</sup>. This impression grows stronger, the more we advance with the reading of the Apostles' writings. Take, for instance, Matt. iii. 9: "Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance." This verse, like so many others in the New Testament in which fruits or harvest are used as metaphors or similes in parables, gains both in intensity and in freshness when studied in connexion with so many allegorical interpretations of the Rabbis, in which the produce of the field and the vineyard play a similar part. One or two instances will not be uninteresting. Thus, with reference to Song of Songs, ii. 2, "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters," a famous Rabbi says: There was a king who had a paradise (or garden), which he had laid out with rows of fig-trees, rows of vine, and rows of pomegranates. He put the paradise in the hands of a tenant, and left. In after days the king came to see what his tenant had accomplished. He found the garden neglected, and full of thorns and thistles. He then brought wood-cutters to

<sup>1</sup> *Lev. Rabbah*, I.

<sup>2</sup> See especially the Midrash, *Lekach Tob.*, ad loc.

cut it down. Suddenly he perceived a lily. The king plucked it, and smelled it, and his soul returned upon him. He turned and said, "For the sake of the lily the garden shall be saved." The lily is the congregation of Israel; intent on the strength of its devotion to the Torah, it saved the world from the destruction to which the generation of the deluge condemned it by their wicked deeds<sup>1</sup>.

In another place, however, it is the individual who is compared to the lily. Thus, Song of Songs, vi. 2, "My beloved went down to his garden to gather the lilies," is applied to the death of the righteous, whose departure from this world is a gathering of flowers undertaken by God himself, who is the beloved one<sup>2</sup>.

In this connexion we may mention here another Rabbinic parable, in which the wheat takes the place of the lily. It is given as an illustration of Song of Songs, vii. 3, and Psalm ii. 12. The scriptural words in the latter place are נִשְׁקוּ בָרֶ, which the Rabbis explain to mean "Kiss the wheat," illustrating it by the following parable:—The straw and the chaff are arguing together. The straw maintained, that it is for its sake that the field was sown and ploughed, whilst the stem claimed that it was on its account that the work was undertaken. Thereupon the wheat said, "Wait until the harvest comes, and we shall know with what purpose the field was sown." When the harvest came and the work of threshing began, the chaff was scattered to the wind, the stem was given to the flames, whilst the wheat was carefully gathered on the floor. In a similar way the heathens say, "It is for our sake that the world was created," whilst Israel makes the same claim for itself. But wait for the Day of Judgment, when the chaff will be eliminated, and the wheat will be kissed. I need hardly remind you of the parable in Matt. xiii<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Cant. Rabbah*, ad loc.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Pesikta Rabbathi* (ed. Friedmann), p. 36, text and notes.

To return to chapter iii. I will quote verse 11 in which the Baptist in his testimony to Jesus says, "I indeed baptized you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The baptism of course represents the *טבילה* or immersion of the Bible, enforced by the Rabbis in the case of proselytes. According to some authorities it was also customary with people entering on a course of repentance<sup>1</sup>. The expression "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear," reminds one of the similar Talmudic phrase, running "He who will explain to me a certain word, I will carry his cloth after him to the bath<sup>2</sup>." That is to say, that he will show submission to his authority by performing for him menial work. As to the term "baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire," the latter has a parallel in the Talmudic dictum, that the main *טבילה* immersion, as a means of purification, is by fire<sup>3</sup>. The former term, "baptism by the Holy Ghost," is certainly obscure, and has given a good deal of trouble to the commentators; but it must have been readily understood by the Jews, who even spoke of drawing the Holy Spirit *שואבין רוח הקודש*, a term only applied to liquids<sup>4</sup>. Note also the following passage from a sermon by R. Akiba: "Blessed are ye Israelites. Before whom are ye purified, and who is he who purifies you? Ye are purified before your Father in Heaven, and it is he who purifies you," as it is said, "The Lord is the *Mikveh* of Israel<sup>5</sup>." The word *מקוה* is taken in the sense in which it occurs several times in the Pentateuch, meaning "a gathering of waters," or a ritual bath taken after various kinds of uncleanness. The Rabbi then derives from the words of Jeremiah xvii. 13 the lesson that as the *Mikveh* is the means of purification for defile-

<sup>1</sup> *Shibbole Halleket*, 145 a.

<sup>2</sup> B. T. *Baba Mezia*, 45 a, and parallel passages.

<sup>3</sup> B. T. *Sanhedrin*, 39 a.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. T. *Sukkah*, 55 a.

<sup>5</sup> *Mishneh, Yoma*, VIII, 9.



ment (in the sense of the Levitical legislation), so God is the source of purity for Israel. It should be borne in mind, that according to the Rabbinic interpretation, the term טומאה, "defilement," applies to all sorts of sins, especially those of an immoral nature, whilst the process of purifying mostly concerns the heart. "Purify our hearts, that we serve thee in truth," is the constant prayer of the Synagogue.

טהרה, or "purification," is, according to the mystic, R. Pinchas b. Yair, of the second century, one of the higher rungs in the ladder leading to the obtainment of the holy spirit<sup>1</sup>. I do not know how far this conception may be connected with the gospel narrative, according to which the baptism of Jesus (or the Taahara of Jesus) was followed by the descent of the holy spirit. If R. Pinchas b. Yair could be taken, as some maintain, as one of the last representatives of the Essenes, there would indeed be no objection to see in the synoptic account an illustration of the principle laid down by these mystics. At any rate it may serve as a transition to the verses I am about to quote from Matt. iii. 16, 17, running thus: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him: and lo, a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." The symbolism of the Holy Ghost by a dove is a common notion in Rabbinic literature. The dove is considered as the most chaste among the birds, never forsaking her mate. The congregation of Israel, which never betrays its God, is therefore compared to the dove<sup>2</sup>. "Once upon a time," so runs a Rabbinic legend, which I give here in substance, "King David went out for a hawking expedition. Whereupon Satan came and turned himself into a deer, which David tried to hit, but could not reach. Constantly pursuing the animal, David was thus carried from his suite,

<sup>1</sup> *Cant. Rabbah*, I, and parallel passages.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*.

owing to the machinations of Satan, into the land of the Philistines, where he was suddenly confronted by the relatives of Goliath, who were all thirsting for his blood. Thereupon a dove descended before Abishai, who had remained behind in the king's camp, and began to emit wailing tones. Abishai at once understood its meaning, saying, 'The congregation of Israel is compared to a dove, as it is said, Wings of a dove covered with silver' (Ps. lxxviii. 14), and thus interpreted the appearance of the dove as a sign that King David, the hope of Israel, was in danger of his life, and he set out to his rescue<sup>1</sup>."

A closer parallel, however, is the following passage attributed to the well-known mystic, B. Soma, a younger contemporary of the Apostles. The passage runs thus:—R. Joshua b. Chananyah was standing upon the terrace of the temple-mountain. B. Soma saw him, but did not rise up before him (as he ought to have done, seeing that R. Joshua was his master). R. Joshua asked him "Whence and whither, Ben Soma?" The answer B. Soma gave him was, "I was looking at (or rather meditating upon) the upper waters (above the firmament) and the under waters (under the firmament). The space between the two waters is not broader than three fingers; as it is said, 'the Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters,' like a dove brooding over her young, partly touching them and partly not touching them<sup>2</sup>."

I need hardly say that we have here to deal with a fragment of a Jewish Gnosis, and I must refer you to the works of Joel, Graetz, and Freudenthal, for more information upon this point, but it must be noted that some parallel passages read "eagle" instead of "dove." Deut. xxxii. 11 lends some countenance to this reading, but the parallels just quoted from the New Testament as well as the famous vision of R. Jose, in which the daughter-voice is complaining in a tender voice like a dove, saying "Woe unto the

<sup>1</sup> B. T. *Sanhedrin*, 95 a.

<sup>2</sup> B. T. *Chaggigah*, 15 a, and parallel passages.

father, whose children were expelled from his table<sup>1</sup>," speak for the reading given first.

After the appearance of the Holy Ghost, Jesus is greeted, as we have seen, by a voice from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." These words represent, as rightly remarked by the commentators, a combined paraphrase of Ps. ii. 7 and Isa. xli. 1. The voice from heaven, as is well known, corresponds with the Rabbinic "Daughter of a voice" (בתקול) or daughter-voice, occupying the third place in the scale of revelation. I cannot enter here into the various aspects and functions of the daughter-voice, about which a good deal has been written, but I should like to note its following two peculiar features<sup>2</sup>.

The first is, that in many cases the daughter-voice, when employed as a means of revelation, finds its expression not in a fresh message but in reproducing some verse or sentence from the Hebrew Bible. Thus it is recorded by the Rabbis that when they (the authorities) intended to include King Solomon in the number of those who forfeited their salvation, the daughter-voice put in the protest of heaven, in the words of Job xxxiv. 33, "Shall his recompense be as thou wilt, that thou refusest it?"<sup>3</sup> The great reconciliation again of God with the house of David, as represented by the exile king Jeconiah, when the Babylonian captivity was nearing its end, was announced by the daughter-voice in the words of Jeremiah, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee: for thou art the Lord our God" (iii. 22)<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted, however, that the daughter-voice is not confined in its quotations to the canonical scriptures. Sometimes the daughter-voice even quotes sentences from the Apocrypha. This

<sup>1</sup> B. T. *Berachoth*, 3 a.

<sup>2</sup> See Löw, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, p. 58, n. 1. A good essay on the subject is still a desideratum.

<sup>3</sup> *Num. Rabbah*, XIV, and parallel passages.

<sup>4</sup> *Lev. Rabbah*, XXI.

was the case in Jabneh, where the Synhedrin met after the destruction of the Temple. There a voice from heaven was heard reproducing a verse from the Wisdom of Ben Sira (iii. 22), "Ye have no need of the things that are secret<sup>1</sup>." It is true that Ben Sira has "thou hast no need" (in the singular), but it would seem as if the voice from heaven is not always very exact in its quotations, adapting them in its own way to the message to be announced. Thus, for instance, on the occasion of Saul disobeying the commandment of God regarding the extermination of the Amalekites, there came the daughter-voice and said unto him, "Be not more righteous than thy Maker" **אל תצדק יותר**<sup>2</sup>. You will easily recognize in this warning the words of Ecclesiastes (vii. 16), "Be not righteous over much" **אל תצדק הרבה**, only that **הרבה** was altered into **יותר**, required by the prefix of **מקונן**, which word was apparently added by the voice from heaven.

Another important feature of the daughter-voice is, that in some cases it is only audible to those who are prepared to hear it. "Every day," says the rather mystically inclined R. Joshua b. Levi, "goes forth a voice from Mount Sinai, and makes proclamation and says, 'Woe to the creatures for their contempt of the Torah.'" As rightly pointed out by the commentators, this voice is only heard by fine, sensitive natures, that are receptive of divine messages even after the discontinuance of prophecy<sup>3</sup>. In this case the daughter-voice becomes something quite subjective, and loses a great deal of its authoritative character. The renegade Elisha ben Abuyah, or as he is commonly called **אחר**, the "other one," in his despair of doing repentance, heard a voice coming straight from behind the throne of God, saying unto him, "Come back, ye backsliding children, except thou 'other one,'" and thus he abandoned himself to an immoral life<sup>4</sup>. Contrast this story with that

<sup>1</sup> Jer. T. *Sotah*, 22 a.

<sup>2</sup> *Chapters of R. Eliezer*, XLIV, but see also B. T. *Yoma*, 22 b.

<sup>3</sup> See *Perek R. Meir*.

<sup>4</sup> B. T. *Chaggigah*, 15 a.

of Manasseh, the worst sinner among the kings of Judah. It is to this effect. When the captains of the king of Assyria defeated Manasseh and put him among thorns, and inflicted upon him the most cruel tortures, he invoked all the strange gods he was in the habit of worshipping, but no relief came. Suddenly he said, "I remember my father once made me read the following verses (from Deut. iv. 30, 31), 'When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, . . . return thou to the Lord thy God. For the Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee nor destroy thee.'" He then began to address his prayers to God. The angels—in a most unangelic way, I am sorry to say—shut up the gates of heaven against his prayer, but the Holy One, blessed be he, said, "If I do not receive him I shut the gate in the face of repentance." And thus "he was entreated of him and heard his supplication<sup>1</sup>." The moral of the two stories is, that the "other one" trusted to fresh messages, and went to perdition, while Manasseh fell back upon the family Bible and was saved. It is probable that it was such moral catastrophes as recorded in the case of the "other one" which brought the voice of heaven into disrepute. The verdict of the Rabbis in the second century was, that no attention is to be paid to it when arrogating to decide against the moral conviction of the majority. The Torah is not in heaven<sup>2</sup>. Its interpretation is left to the conscience of catholic Israel.

Now it is this conscience of Israel which is not satisfied with the lesson to be derived from the Scriptures at the first glance, or rather the first hearing, but insists upon its expansion. Thus when interpreting Lev. xix. 36, the Rabbis somehow managed to derive from it the law of "let your speech be yea, yea; nay, nay<sup>3</sup>." Again, when commenting upon the seventh commandment, they interpreted it in such a way as to include the prohibition

<sup>1</sup> *Pesikta* (ed. Buber), p. 162 sq.

<sup>2</sup> B. T. *Baba Mezia*, 59 a.

<sup>3</sup> *Torath Kohanim* (ed. Weiss), 91 b.

of even an unchaste look or immoral thought<sup>1</sup>. The rules of interpretation by which such maxims were derived from the Scriptures would perhaps not satisfy the modern philologist. They indeed belong to the "second sense" of the Scriptures, the sense which is the heart and soul of all history and development. "God hath spoken once, twice I have heard this" (Ps. lxii. 12), which verse is interpreted by the Rabbis to mean that Scripture is capable of many interpretations or hearings<sup>2</sup>. But it is interesting to find that these interpretations of the Scriptures tending to improve upon the "first sense" are sometimes introduced by the formula: "I might hear so-and-so, therefore there is a teaching to say that," &c. תלמוד אני... למד. Put into modern language the formula means this: The words of the Scriptures might be at the first glance (or first hearing) conceived to have this or that meaning, but if we consider the context or the way in which the sentences are worded, we must arrive at a different conclusion. This parallel may perhaps throw some light on the expression ἡκούσατε, "you have heard that it was said ... but I say unto you," a phrase frequent in the Sermon on the Mount. After the declaration made by Jesus of his attachment to the Torah, it is not likely that he would quote passages from it showing its inferiority. The only way to get over the difficulty is to assume that Jesus used some such phrase as the one just quoted, שמע אני, "I might hear," or "one might hear," that is to say, "one might be mistaken in pressing the literal sense of the verses in question too closely." Against such a narrow way of dealing with Scripture he warned his disciples by some formula, as תלמוד למד, "there is a teaching to say that the words must not be taken in such a sense." But the formula being a strictly Rabbinic idiom, it was not rendered quite accurately by the Greek translator. Hence the apparent contradiction between Matt. iii. 17, 20, and the

<sup>1</sup> See *Pesikta Rabbathi*, p. 124 b.

<sup>2</sup> B. T. *Sanhedrin*, 34 a.

<sup>3</sup> *Mechilta*, 3 a, 6 a, &c.

matter following upon these verses. I only wish to add that in Rabbinic literature, it is sometimes God himself who undertakes such rectifications. Thus we read in an ancient Midrash with reference to Jer. iv. 2, "And thou shalt swear as the Lord liveth, in truth and in judgment": "The Holy One, blessed be he, said unto Israel, 'Think not that you may swear by my name, even in truth.' You may not do so unless you have obtained that high degree of sanctity by which Abraham, Joseph, and Job were distinguished, who were called God-fearing men," *יראי אלהים*. This limitation of swearing, even in truth, is indicated according to the Rabbis in Deut. xx. 10, which verse is interpreted to mean, "If thou fear thy God, and art exclusively in his service, thou mayst swear by his name," not otherwise<sup>1</sup>.

Having mentioned the name of the patriarch, I may perhaps state the fact that, besides the epithets "the God-fearing" Abraham, or Abraham "the friend of God," Abraham also bears in Rabbinic literature the title of Rock. The wording of the Rabbinical passage and the terms used in it will not be uninteresting to the student of the New Testament. In Matt. xvi. 18 we read: "And I also say unto thee, that thou art *Petros*, and upon this *petra* I will build my church." The Rabbinic passage forms an illustration of Num. xxiii. 9, "For from the top of the rocks I see him," and runs thus: There was a king who desired to build, and to lay foundations he dug constantly deeper, but found only a swamp. At last he dug and found a *petra* (this is the very word the Rabbi uses). He said, "On this spot I shall build and lay the foundations." So the Holy One, blessed be he, desired to create the world, but meditating upon the generations of Enoch and the deluge, he said, "How shall I create the world whilst those wicked men will only provoke me?" But as soon as God perceived that there would rise an Abraham, he said, "Behold, I have found the *petra* upon which to build and to lay foundations."

<sup>1</sup> *Tanchuma*, מנחם.

Therefore he called Abraham Rock, as it is said, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn. Look unto Abraham, your father" (Is. li. 1, 2)<sup>1</sup>.

The parallels given so far have been more according to the letter. I will now give one or two parallels according to the spirit.

I have already referred to the attempts made by various authors to describe the life and times of Jesus Christ. The best book of this class is undoubtedly Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. It is a very learned work, particularly as far as the Greek and Roman documents are concerned. Its treatment of such topics as the geography of Palestine, the topography of Jerusalem, the plan of the Temple, and kindred subjects is almost perfect. A most excellent feature in it is the completeness of its bibliography, there being hardly any dissertation or article in any of the learned periodicals, which is not duly registered by the author. But all these fine things are, to use a quaint Rabbinic phrase, only "after-courses of wisdom." Bibliography in particular is not even an after-course. It partakes more of the nature of the *menu* served sometimes by very ignorant waiters, possessing neither judgment nor discretion. The general vice attaching to this whole class of works is, that no attempt is made in them to gain acquaintance with the inner life of the Jewish nation at the period about which they write. Take for instance, the subject of prayer. Considering that pre-Christian Judaism gave to the world the Psalms, and that post-Christian Judaism produced one of the richest liturgies; considering again that among the various prayers which have come down to us through the medium of the Talmud, there is also one that forms a close parallel to the Lord's Prayer;—considering all this one might expect that also in the times of Jesus the Jews were able to pray, and in fact did pray. The contents of their prayers might be of the

<sup>1</sup> *Yalkut*, I, § 766. See Dr. Taylor's *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, ed. 2, p. 160.



greatest importance for the student, expressing as they probably did the religious sentiments of the age and the ideal aspirations of the nation. But what our theological waiters dish up is a minimum of prayer dressed up in a quantity of rubrics in such a fashion as to stigmatize their authors as miserable pedants. And no attempt is made to enter into the spirit of even this minimum. No explanation is given, for instance, of the meaning of the terms "the kingdom of heaven," the yoke of which the Rabbi was supposed to receive upon himself, the "Hear, O Israel," &c. The terms "sanctification of the name of God," "Father in heaven," and "renewed world" are also frequent in Jewish literature and in the Jewish Prayer-book, but no sufficient attention is given to them. To my knowledge Dalman is the only modern scholar who recognizes the importance of these terms, and similar ones, in their bearing upon a clearer understanding of the New Testament, and has at least made an attempt at their analysis in his book *Die Worte Jesu*.

Another important point, which has never been properly examined, is the unique position which the Kenesseth Israel, the congregation of Israel, or ideal Israel, occupies in Rabbinic theology. Yet it forms a striking parallel to that held by Jesus in Christian theology. The Kenesseth Israel was, like the Spirit of the Messiah, created before the world was called into existence. "She is the beloved of God, in whom he rejoices"; and there is no endearing epithet in the language, such as son, daughter, brother, sister, bride, mother, lamb, or eye, which is not, according to the Rabbis, applied by the Scriptures to express the intimate relation between God and the Kenesseth Israel. Not even the title of "god," of which God is otherwise so jealous, is denied to Israel, as it is written, "I have said ye are gods." Nay, God even says to Moses, "Exalt Israel as much as thou canst, for it is as if thou wert exalting me"; whilst he who denies Israel or rises against Israel is denying God. In fact, it is only through the witness of

Israel that God is God, and he would cease to be so were Israel to disappear, as it is written, "Ye are my witnesses, . . . and I am God<sup>1</sup>." But there is no fear of such a calamity. Israel is older than the universe and forms the rock on which the world was built. As a rock towering up in the sea, so the Keneseth Israel stands out in history, defying all tempests and temptations; for "many waters cannot quench the love" between God and the Keneseth Israel<sup>2</sup>. She is indeed approached by the nations of the world with the seducing words, "What is thy beloved more than another? Beautiful and lovely thou art, if thou wilt mingle among us. Why dost thou permit thyself to go through fire for his sake, to be crucified for his name? Come unto us, where all the dignities in our power are awaiting thee." But Israel resists all temptations; they point to their connexion with God throughout their history, to his love unto them, shown by conferring upon them the gift of holiness, which even a Balaam envied, and to the promise held out to them of the Messianic times, when suffering will cease and Israel will revel in the glory of God<sup>3</sup>." These few quotations suffice to show what an interesting chapter might be added to our knowledge of comparative theology.

Again, our knowledge of the spiritual history of the Jews during the first centuries of our era might be enriched by a chapter on miracles. Starting from the principle that miracles can only be explained by more miracles, an attempt was made some years ago by a student to draw up a list of the wonder-workings of the Rabbis recorded in the Talmud and the Midrashim. He applied himself to the reading of these works, but his reading was only cursory. The list therefore is not complete. Still it yielded a harvest of not less than two hundred and fifty miracles. They

<sup>1</sup> See JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, VI, pp. 419 and 634, for references.

<sup>2</sup> *Yalkut*, *ibid.*; *Genesis Rabbah*, I, and *Cant. Rabbah*, VIII.

<sup>3</sup> *Cant. Rabbah*, VII; *Num. Rabbah*, II; *Siphre* (ed. Friedmann), p. 143 a; and Rashi's *Commentary* to *Cant. V*, 9.

cover all classes of supernatural workings recorded in the Bible, but occur with much greater frequency.

A repetition of these miracles would be tiresome. I will content myself with reproducing a story from Tractate Chagigah, which will illustrate to you how much even the individual Jew shared in the glories conferred upon the Keneseth Israel. I am speaking of course of that individual who is described by the Rabbis as one "who labours in the Torah for its own sake, who is called a lover of God and a lover of humanity. Unto him kingdom and authority are given. Unto him the secrets of the Torah are revealed." The term "authority," by the way, is given with the word ממשלה, suggested probably by Ben Sira xlv. 17, וימשלהו בחוק ומשפט, "and he made him have authority over statute and judgment"; whilst Matt. vii. 29, "and he taught them as one having authority," was probably suggested by Ben Sira iii. 10, ומי של בה ילמדנה, "and he who has authority over it shall teach it." As a man of such authority we may consider R. Jochanan b. Zakkai, the hero of the story I am about to relate. He was the younger member of the "Eighty Club" of the school of Hillel, and thus a contemporary of the Apostles, though he survived them. He was an eye-witness of the terrible catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, an event which he prophesied forty years before it took place. He is best known by the school he established in Jabneh, where the Synhedrin, and with them the divine presence presiding over this assembly, emigrated after the fall of Jerusalem. There (in Jabneh) he died about 108 A. C.

It is related that Rabbi Jochanan b. Zakkai was riding upon his ass on the road, while his pupil, R. Eleazar b. Arach, was walking behind him. Said R. Eleazar to him, "Master, teach me a chapter about the matter relating to the chariot, that is, the vision in the first chapter of Ezekiel." The master declined, preferring to hear the pupil. R. Eleazar said again, "Wilt thou permit me to repeat in thy presence one thing which thou hast taught me?" to

which he gave his assent. R. Jochanan then dismounted from his ass, and wrapped himself up in his gown and seated himself upon a stone under an olive-tree. He said it was disrespectful that he should be riding on his beast whilst his pupil was lecturing on such awful mysteries and the Shechinah (the divine presence) and the Malache Hashareth (the angels-in-waiting) were accompanying them. Immediately R. Eleazar began his exposition. And there came down a fire from heaven and encircled them and the whole field. And the angels assembled and came to hearken, as the sons of men assemble and come to look on at the festivities of bride and bridegroom. And the trees in the field opened their mouths and uttered a song, "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps. . . . Fruitful trees and all cedars, . . . praise ye the Lord." And an angel answered from the fire and said, "This is the matter of the chariot." When he had finished, R. Jochanan b. Zakkai stood up and kissed him on his head, saying, "Praised be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who has given our father Abraham a wise son, who knows to discourse on the glory of our Father in heaven." So much for the story. I need hardly recall to your mind the parallels in the Book of Enoch and in the New Testament<sup>1</sup>.

My lecture is at an end, not so the subject it treats. To accomplish the latter in a proper critical and scientific manner the aid of fellow workers is necessary. I have often heard the wish expressed that a Jew should write a history of the rise of Christianity, who could bring all his Rabbinic learning to bear upon the subject. I do not think that the time is as yet ripe for such an experiment. The best thing to be done at present is, that Christians should devote themselves to the study of Rabbinic literature. The history which would be written after such a study would certainly be more scientific and more critical.

S. SCHECHTER.

<sup>1</sup> B. T. *Chaggigah*, II, and the Jerusalem Talmud, *ibid*.